

the
bloodsuckers
before they
get rid of
you.

THE MAIN COURSE

"Jesus Christ," he told me, "you know Rita and I split, just general attrition and a rather boring unhappiness. anyhow, I've been eating out and it's like a repeat movie or the same dream you keep having over and over."

"whatcha mean?" I asked.

"I mean," he told me, "I keep going into cafe after cafe: dim lights, empty tables. I go in, you know, and no matter the cafe the same man gets up from his newspaper and moves toward my table ..."

"hands you a menu," I said.

"yes, and I am pleased for him: I am bringing him money, I am bringing him trade ..."

"he might suicide otherwise?"

"I don't know," he continued, "anyhow, I order soup, beer, wine, salad, shrimp and fries. I make a small joke, hand the menu back. he walks off toward the kitchen. outside it rains; inside sickening music plays on the radio."

"then?" I asked.

"the soup arrives. not too bad. I read the paper as I spoon the soup and the paper says something like: woman steals baby from mother for 3 months. horse meat from Australia has been served at a nation-wide popular chain of drive-in eating places for 7 months. man kills estranged wife, 3 children and a man who happened to be outside reading the gas meter."

"then?" I asked.

"then the salad comes by. not bad.
I finish the salad. then comes the
main course. fair. somewhat dry and
dirty."

"you eat it?" I asked.

"yeah," he said, "only I needed some help.
I get him up again.
another beer. another wine."

"then?"

"the same man sits by the register.
he waits.
I am finished eating.
I nod.
he comes up and lays the bill on
me.
he goes back by the register.
he sits down."

"he is without talent," I said.
"also, his cook has no talent.
his lightbulbs have
no talent."

"I leave a tip anyhow," he mentioned.

"then?"

"then I get up.
pay.
leave."

"you've eaten."

"yes, but I keep going into cafe after
cafe and the same man gets up from his
newspaper, moves toward my table ..."

"he will only multiply," I suggested,
he will never suicide. he will sit under dim lights,
pretending to be what he isn't.
he doesn't even love or hate life,
he doesn't even consider it."

"I keep having this nightmare," he said,
"it's like, you know: eyes fingers hair
bellybutton butt, other parts --
they could have been assigned to any
inanimate finity."

"things get dark," I said, "and we awaken with a worse hangover than ever before."

"I gotta begin eating in," he said.

THE YELLOW PENCIL

I am sitting in the stands with a two-night, two-day hangover; the last night was the worst: white wine, red wine and tequila.

I am out there because I have evolved an astonishing new theory on how to beat the races.

the money is secondary: it's only used as a guideline to see if I am on the given path.

I picked up \$302 the day before and I am \$265 ahead going into the sixth.

I can barely function but the new theory (formula K) enacts itself continually:
M plus S plus C plus O
(each brought down to relative powers of $1/4$ each):
the horse with the lowest total is the winner.

it is like being inside one of the very secrets of life itself.
when your figures tell you that a 2nd, 3rd or 4th favorite can beat the favorite and when your figures only select one horse,